

IN PHILADELPHIA, JANUARY 27, 2009.

The Declaration of these Citizens of Philadelphia of our Independence from Casinos

When in the course of a city's life, it becomes necessary for its citizens to band together and demand that their home be respected and their neighborhoods valued above the desires of the predatory gambling trade, those citizens have the right to expect that their representatives will stand with them and defend their interests. _____ We hold these truths to be self-evident, that our government should serve the needs of the people, that the workings of any government claiming to be democratic must be transparent to all, that initiatives should serve the interests of people, safe and secure in their communities, and not the inverse, and that the good of the people is the standard by which all public policy should be measured. _____ The recent history of governing Philadelphia is a history of repeated concealment, undemocratic decision-making, and the dismissal of the needs of its people and their neighborhoods. With respect to predatory gambling, this history includes numerous injuries against the public good, including: _____ The enactment of Pennsylvania's Gaming Act, without any public input, without any debate, testimony or cost-benefit analysis, in the dead of night, on the weekend of July 4, 2007, without the support of state legislators from Philadelphia and without any condemnation by any city elected official. _____ The creating of Gaming Control Board that is packed with political appointees who facilitate the predatory gambling trade instead of regulating it; and that protect the elected officials by acting as scapegoats. _____ The inappropriate and unethical conduct of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court and its subsequent ruling upholding the constitutionality of the Gaming Act, when it was clearly enacted in violation of the state constitution. _____ The Pennsylvania Supreme Court's stripping Philadelphians of the right to vote in a referendum designed to elicit the public voice as to the degree to which neighborhoods should be protected from predatory gambling facilities. _____ The refusal to provide information about the background of casino applicants, the design and function of casinos or the costs of predatory gambling in the form of slots parlors. _____ The blocking of public debate and discussion on the consequences of casinos to our city. _____ The willingness of our government to sacrifice the well being of its people in favor of a predatory trade. _____ The neglect of issues of concern to neighborhoods in the interest of expedient approval of the insertion of casinos into those neighborhoods. _____ The failure to understand and appreciate the cultural value and long-term financial potential of good land use development, including heritage tourism attendant to investigating and preserving important archeological and historic resources at sites currently eyed for slot parlors. _____ The failure to understand and appreciate the need to protect the natural environment, including our precious Delaware River waterfront. _____ The failure to understand let alone be concerned about the fact that the predatory gambling trade relies on addicted and problem gamblers, which results in substantial human suffering, family breakdown, including divorces and child abuse, and bankruptcy, fraud, embezzlement and other crimes, all of which cause great damage to those who never gamble. _____ The continued spending of government funds on the defense of the casino industry, and the planned expenditure of funds to provide infrastructure for that industry, while funding for public institutions such as libraries and firehouses are cut. _____ The repeated use of closed-door meetings and negotiations outside of the public's view to negotiate deals that benefit the predatory gaming trade at the expense of the rights and needs of the public. _____ In light of these wrongs done in the name of promoting the predatory gambling trade, we, the undersigned people of Philadelphia, mutually pledge to ourselves our Lives, our Fortunes, our sacred Honor and do declare ourselves opposed to casinos being built anywhere in our city, and demand that our representatives in government do the same.